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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 123317

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/19/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KWBG](#) [AL](#)
SUBJECT: DEMARCHE REQUEST: NOVEMBER 26 ARAB LEAGUE
MINISTERIAL

Classified By: NEA A/S David Welch, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph three.

SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (C) The Arab League will convene for an emergency ministerial meeting in Cairo on November 26 to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and recent efforts to affect an intra-Palestinian reconciliation. The Department wants to keep the focus of this meeting on the advances made in the Annapolis process since November 2007, including in the bilateral Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and on efforts to bolster Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad, the Palestinian Authority (PA), and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) vis-a-vis extremist elements such as Hamas. End summary.

OBJECTIVES

[1](#)3. (C) Posts are requested to approach senior government officials to pursue the following objectives:

-- Maintain focus on the Annapolis process and on the ongoing efforts by Israelis and Palestinians to conclude a final, comprehensive peace. Building on the positive atmosphere generated during recent Quartet events in New York (September) and Sharm el Sheikh (November) with Arab representatives, encourage an explicit expression of support for the negotiations to isolate the naysayers.

-- Emphasize the United States' firm commitment to the negotiations; the bipartisan consensus in the U.S. in support of the two-state solution and the Annapolis process; and the fact that the establishment of a Palestinian state will not come in a single, dramatic moment but as the result of a methodical, sincere initiative by the parties, which is underway.

-- Underscore the importance of bolstering--rather than undermining--the legitimacy of President Abbas and the PLO, the legitimate leadership and representative of the Palestinians, who has demonstrated a continued interest in peace and in a better future for his people.

-- Ascribe the failure of the recent Palestinian reconciliation effort to Hamas' intransigence; condemn the Hamas breach of the carefully negotiated "tahdiya" in Gaza and the resulting cost to Palestinian civilians; and highlight the importance of the Quartet principles--renunciation of violence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and understandings.

REPORTING DEADLINE

14. (U) Post is requested to report the results of this demarche by cable to NEA/IPA Desk Officer Payton Knopf by Tuesday, November 25.

BACKGROUND

15. (SBU) The Annapolis Conference was the first major Middle East peace conference since 1991 and the only high-level, multi-lateral meeting of its kind ever to be held on American soil. Annapolis brought together 50 countries from all continents, including 14 leading Arab states. Annapolis launched the first substantive negotiations in nearly a decade, laid a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians to work together, and focused the international community's support. The framework for negotiating a final resolution of the conflict is before us: Determined, professional negotiations between the parties; consistent yet constructive international engagement, led by the United States, and a vigorous effort to improve conditions on the ground.

16. (SBU) During their un-precedented briefing for the Quartet on November 9 in Sharm el Sheikh, Israeli Foreign Minister Livni and President Abbas re-affirmed their historic commitment to bilateral negotiations toward the fulfillment of the Annapolis process and the establishment of a Palestinian state. While the advances remain private to

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protect the integrity of the process, the parties reported that they have made significant progress in outlining a final peace treaty and discussing the core issues of the conflict. The negotiators pledged to continue the negotiations until they reach a final, comprehensive agreement, even in the face of political transitions in Israel and the U.S.

17. (SBU) The parties have asked that the international community provide support for the negotiations in three ways: 1) Respect the mutually agreed principles for the negotiations; 2) Promote an environment conducive to peace, non-violence, and the two-state solution, including through support for the legitimate Palestinian government; and 3) Avoid third-party intervention in the negotiations absent a direct request from the parties. The international community must respect these requests. Regional states in particular have a special responsibility to support the first serious peace negotiations since the collapse of the Camp David talks and to acknowledge the brave choices that President Abbas and the PLO have taken to build a better future for their people.

18. (SBU) We have welcomed Egyptian efforts to broker and maintain a period of calm in Gaza and southern Israel and to promote Palestinian reconciliation, consistent with the Quartet principles and the PLO commitments. The Egyptian-sponsored Palestinian national dialogue faltered, however, because Hamas refused to participate in a November 10 meeting of all Palestinian factions in Cairo. The recent escalation of tension in Gaza--including several rocket attacks on southern Israel--is yet another example of Hamas' readiness to resort to violence at the expense of the long-term interests of the Palestinian people. While we continue to press Israel to take steps to improve humanitarian access in Gaza, Hamas' actions prevent the provision much needed relief to the civilian population.

19. (SBU) Any effort that dilutes the authority of President Abbas and the PLO empowers those elements that refuse to renounce violence and build on past agreements between the parties, thereby denying Palestinians their long overdue state. With regard to President Abbas' term and the electoral calendar, it is the prerogative of the legitimate Palestinian government to interpret the Palestinian Basic Law and determine the appropriate date for presidential and legislative elections.

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